

'15 & Forward Listening Sessions

Summary of Results



Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks

September 2015

In 2015, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) began working on an initiative called *'15 and Forward* (15 + F) to evaluate its vision and goals, which will help to guide the agency for the next 10 years. Ultimately, 15 + F will help FWP understand today's needs and set a direction for the future that is most valuable and relevant to Montana's public and outdoor resources. This vision update will provide the foundation on which FWP builds work plans, programs and services and will guide how FWP does business in the years ahead.

As part of this initiative, FWP completed a series of 10 public and eight internal (FWP staff) listening sessions held across the state between July 10 and August 13, 2015. The goals of these listening sessions were to learn more from the public and staff regarding their perceptions and expectations of FWP; to better understand the values, needs, and priorities of the public and staff; and, to identify issues and challenges going forward for the agency.

Public listening sessions were held in Kalispell (FWP Region 1), Missoula (FWP Region 2), Butte (FWP Region 3), Bozeman (FWP Region 3), Lewistown (FWP Region 4), Great Falls (FWP Region 4), Billings (FWP Region 5), Glasgow (FWP Region 6), Miles City (FWP Region 7), and Helena (FWP State Headquarters). The public listening sessions were announced through media outlets with an open invitation for all members of the public to attend. In addition to announcing the listening sessions through the media, FWP regional staff worked to directly invite people in their local communities to attend each public session in an effort to encourage diverse participation. A total of 306 members of the public ended up attending the public listening sessions statewide.

Internal staff listening sessions were held at each FWP regional office across the state and at the *Montana Wild* facility for those agency employees who work in Helena. All FWP employees were invited to participate and a total of 371 FWP staff ended up attending the internal listening sessions statewide.

A content analysis of both the internal and external responses to the comprehensive set of questions asked at the listening sessions resulted in the identification of 14 vision-related themes which are presented in this document. Most of these themes occurred in both the public and staff discussions, but a few were unique to the internal listening sessions (particularly those themes regarding agency cohesiveness, internal leadership, and consistency). Of note, each of the themes identified below apply to both internal and external FWP settings. Equal weight should be given to each of these themes—they are NOT listed in any particular order that would imply that one theme is more important than any other theme. Each theme includes example quotes of actual comments received from listening session participants. In some instances these quotes indicate that FWP is doing well with regards to a particular theme; and, in other instances the quotes demonstrate areas where the agency is challenged to improve.

be **RESPONSIVE/COLLABORATIVE**. This includes demonstrating good communication skills; being responsive; being open to sharing information/ideas; actively listening; demonstrating good people skills; being transparent; and, being open, fair, honest, and trustworthy. This also includes fostering a collaborative/team approach to doing business; partnering with others; building relationships; engaging and involving people in important decision-making processes, being open to receiving input; actively seeking out and considering input that is received; and, striving to communicate/explain rationale for decisions that are made. This also includes staying involved with people and issues at the local community level.

"Communication with public back & forth."

"Partnering, collaborating."

"Responsive to gathering public opinion."

"Sometimes the why is not included with decisions."

"Lacking transparency on certain issues."

"People skills."



be **INCLUSIVE**. This includes serving all people who are interested in Montana's diverse fish, wildlife, and park resources.

- "Open to diverse views."*
- "Everybody should have a say in FWP work."*
- "Be inclusive to all publics."*
- "Consumptive versus non-consumptive users."*



provide quality **PUBLIC SERVICE**. This includes helping people to gain access to Montana's diverse fish, wildlife, and parks resources; helping to remove barriers to participation, assisting and supporting people to participate in diverse outdoor activities; and, providing for public safety. This also includes offering a helpful presence in the office, in the field, in local communities, and in all the places where people go to find information (e.g., Internet, print, radio, phone, meetings, etc.) about Montana's fish, wildlife, and park resources. This also includes informing, educating, and providing outreach to people about any number of outdoor topics including fish, wildlife, parks, recreation opportunities, places to go, things to see, how to do things, safety and education programs, etc. This also includes recognizing the importance of providing quality services, programs, management, and facilities.

- "Informative and eager to help."*
- "Helpful field wardens."*
- "Involved in local communities."*
- "Regulations too complex."*
- "Gaps in service."*
- "Increasing public access & opportunity."*
- "More use of social media."*



be **COHESIVE**. This focuses on ensuring that FWP continues to have committed, dedicated, hard-working, and motivated employees that passionately care about Montana's diverse fish, wildlife and park resources and the diverse people the agency serves. This includes recognizing the importance of having a productive and positive internal work environment; valuing employees; seeking input from employees, showing appreciation for and recognizing employee contributions; being sensitive to employee workload issues; holding employees accountable; and, having good internal agency communications. This also includes promoting an operational environment that leads to Divisions, Regions, and Headquarters effectively working together. This also includes paying fair wages that helps the agency to better recruit and retain highly trained/skilled employees.

- "Working together."*
- "Unified."*
- "Valuing employees..."*
- "Morale/attitude (employees)."*
- "Lack of cooperation among divisions."*
- "Work environment."*
- "Communication within the agency."*



be **ADEQUATELY FUNDED**. This includes having adequate funding and resources to do what is expected of the agency.

- "Well funded."*
- "Financially stable, diverse revenue..."*
- "Underfunded."*
- "Budget size versus public expectations."*
- "Diverse funding sources..."*
- "Declining budgets."*
- "More wardens and staff needed..."*



be **STRATEGIC / RESOURCEFUL**. This includes being forward thinking, planning for the future, and thinking about the big picture. This also includes identifying priorities, making efficient use of limited resources available to the agency, and coming up with innovative and/or creative solutions to problems. This also includes having a well-coordinated mission and vision for the agency that is effectively implemented.

- "Strategic spending."*
- "Lots of work with limited staff."*
- "Understands big picture."*
- "15 & Forward initiative."*
- "Short-term versus long-term thinking."*
- "No definition to what we do."*
- "Defined mission and vision."*



demonstrate **INTEGRITY**. This includes being steadfast in adhering to high principles and/or professional standards. This also including sticking to what the agency believes is the right thing to do.

- "Standing firm."*
- "Having a backbone."*
- "Backbone to meet agency mission."*
- "Agency does not defend itself."*
- "FWP needs to take strong positions..."*
- "Be more assertive..."*



be **PROACTIVE**. This includes taking initiative by acting rather than reacting to issues/events.

- "Proactive rather than reactive."*
- "Always behind."*
- "Slow to react to issues."*
- "Overreact or under react."*
- "FWP needs to take strong positions on issues..."*
- "Slow response time..."*



effectively work with **EXTERNAL INFLUENCES**. This includes effectively working with and addressing a number of external influences (e.g., Montana Legislature, Governor's Office, other agencies, litigation, etc.) that can often affect the work of the agency.

- "Lack of Legislative support."*
- "Political sways."*
- "Legislative relations."*
- "Political decisions imposed on FWP."*
- "Lawsuits."*
- "Keeping wildlife management in FWP hands..."*



value **TRADITION**. This includes recognizing the importance of continuing to serve Montana in ways that the agency has historically served. This includes continuing to serve users groups that have been a cornerstone to fish, wildlife, and parks management in Montana. This also includes recognizing the importance of retaining institutional knowledge and offering program continuity.

- "Legacy—conservation success."*
- "Successful historic model..."*
- "Hunter/angler recruitment."*
- "Loss of institutional knowledge."*
- "Staying true to traditional sportsmen."*
- "Shrinking license sales."*



be **CONSISTENT**. This includes making reasonably or logically arrived at decisions that are not in conflict with one another. This also includes consistently implementing programs, plans, and policies.

- "Consistent with flexibility."*
- "Not following elk mgt plan."*
- "Policy can be inconsistent."*
- "Lack of consistency..."*
- "Block Management audit."*
- "Consistent leadership."*
- "Not following rules/laws about game damage..."*



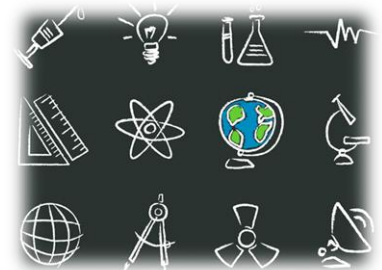
be **STEWARDS OF THE RESOURCE**. This includes working to conserve, protect, enhance, and manage Montana's diverse fish, wildlife, and park resources. This also includes working to overcome specific challenges to management (e.g., climate change, disease, invasive species, access, predators, trapping, habitat fragmentation, energy development, changing population dynamics, changing public values, increasing use and associated resource pressure, etc.). This also includes recognizing the importance of Montana's truly unique and diverse outdoor resources.

- "Commitment to the resource."*
- "Resource ethic."*
- "History of successful stewardship..."*
- "Wildlife biologists, habitat mgt stuck in the past."*
- "Not enough focus on non-game."*
- "Global warming."*
- "Habitat loss..."*



be **SCIENCE BASED**. This includes recognizing that research and good science is an important foundation of agency management activities and decision-making processes.

- "Science-based management."*
- "Scientific integrity."*
- "Data based decisions accurate."*
- "Not using best available science."*
- "Not enough on-the-ground research."*
- "Management by politics as opposed to science."*
- "Science versus politics."*



provide **LEADERSHIP**. This includes motivating others and providing strong leadership in diverse settings (both internally and externally) related to the fish, wildlife, and park resources the agency is entrusted to manage.

- "Engaged leaders/commissioners."*
- "Clear leadership direction."*
- "Leadership with foresight."*
- "Lack of leadership."*
- "Lack of support from administration."*
- "Weak or poorly focused leadership."*
- "Lack of quality leaders."*
- "Consistent leadership."*



FWP appreciates all the members of the public and FWP staff who attending the listening sessions and provided invaluable input to the agency. Ultimately, the information gathered at these listening sessions will aid FWP in the development of an up-to-date vision document for the agency. For more information regarding the '15 & Forward Initiative, please contact FWP's Responsive Management Unit via email at doneill@mt.gov or by phone (406) 444-3755.